

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heart-breaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

We farm close to 200 acres. We are young farmers (under 30), and we are trying to succeed in what seems to be a dying occupation.

A huge blessing right now is that commodity prices are high. Yet ridiculously high fuel prices is causing our overhead to skyrocket. This year we are paying at least \$70 more per acre on fertilizer, due to the cost of fuel. Today I paid our most recent bill for farm diesel, at \$4.409 per gallon. On ag diesel! Being farmers, we of course live outside of town, so driving into town is cost-preventive. We are wondering if there is any end in sight to the rise of fuel prices. Will we be able to continue farming if the costs keep rising? How high will they go? There are so many questions. There has got to be an alternative to being at the mercy of foreign oil suppliers. They are crippling our society.

TROY and KRISTA, *Caldwell*.

Thank you for providing this outlet to vent. I find it absolutely abhorrent that Venezuela and China can drill 60 miles off the Florida coast but the U.S. cannot because of the incredible power of the environmental lobby. (One Senator) a few weeks ago said that even if we drilled in ANWR, it would only affect the pump price of gas by a penny. Yet when the President went to visit Saudi Arabia, (that same Senator) said if the President could convince them to increase output of 1 million barrels a day, it should drop the price of gas by \$.50. That is the same output potential from ANWR, and yet he and other obstructionists on Capitol Hill continue to get away with such duplicity and idiocy. If we had started drilling there in the '90s when it first passed Congress, we would now have more control over our own energy destiny. Instead, we continue to find ourselves over an Arab "barrel."

Energy is literally the fuel that drives our economy. It is imperative that we take control of our future by placing national interests ahead of the environmental extremists who exert such control over our nation.

RICHARD, *Pocatello*.

Thank you for the chance to tell you how the high energy prices have affected our fam-

ily. I am a stay-at-home mom of two, ages 8 and 6. My husband and I have a lot of family who lives in Utah who we use to travel and visit at least once a month. Due to the high gas prices, we are only able to travel down about every four months. We live just outside Idaho Falls and use to drive where we needed to go without much thought. Now my husband rides his bike to work and only drives if the weather is terrible, and the kids and I have to bike to run our daily errands. That would not concern me as much but the roads we have to travel are very busy and do not have bike lanes, sidewalks, or much of a shoulder so they are dangerous for us to ride on. The kids and I, when we have to bike, usually go about 10-15 miles round trip.

I would like to see us be able to increase our own oil production and expand nuclear research. We need to be able to stand on our own and not be dependent on foreign oil especially from countries that are in constant turmoil and not friendly to the U.S.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and for standing up for Idahoans.

SHALEEN.

This may be the perfect opportunity to stand up for market economics! We Americans are addicted to oil. The pain we are now feeling may just be the kick in the pants we need to get the collective will to do something about it. With gas so expensive, alternatives become much more attractive. If government must act, please do not sacrifice our last remaining wilderness, or oceans, or air, to satisfy our filthy addiction. Act to help us kick our dependence on this stuff that is causing so many of our problems.

JAMES.

With a continuing rise in energy prices, our family is not only effected at the gas pump but with an increase in grocery and utility bills as well. Because of the great distances between his clients, my husband drives over a 1000 miles a month for his work. This has put a tremendous amount of stress on the family budget. Our only hope before our family hits financial ruin is that the federal government will think more of the people they represent and less of special interest groups.

REBECCA.

We have let the environmental agenda hijack our country and many [conservatives] are allowing it to happen. If we do not start drilling in ANWR and using coal in place of petroleum, we are going to be in a world of hurt. Alternative energy sources are going to be great when they get here, but that is a generation away. As a country trying to stave off the jihadist and Latin dictators, we had better be self-dependent on our own energy. I hope Congress understands their [role] in this mess. How about a reduction in fuel taxes? If the American people continue to be pressed, they will react. There are unintended consequences that may be very surprising to some. Thanks for your service to Idaho.

WADE.

I have to travel 26 miles one way to work. With the price of gas, it does not pay for me to drive back and forth to work. I like my job but with everything else going up it would be cheaper for me to stay home. I make around \$11 per hour and a tank of gas costs me about \$50 to fill up a week. That is \$200 a month that really bites. I do not know how long I can last without going in the hole and losing my home and cars. If it were not for my wife's job, we would be on welfare or in the streets. Thanks for all your help.

HENRY.

My wife and I live in Idaho and work in Spokane Washington. We are part of a large

group that must commute 35 mile one way 5 or 6 days a week in order to pay our bills. My wife and I spend in excess of \$500 per month in fuel just for transportation. This is an immense burden on us and will cause a ripple effect in our ability to do other things.

The part that is most upsetting to us is that we all knew that energy prices would increase dramatically at some point and our elected officials chose to do nothing to prepare for it. For more than 25 years, Congress has chosen to ignore the need to force automakers to improve fuel economy and we have seen the U.S car manufacturers overtaken by the Japanese in part because the Japanese understood fuel mileage and reliability go hand in hand. Congress has consistently chosen to cut Amtrak funds and to not fund commuter rail and bus lines.

The American public needs leadership. We do not need to have the latest poll results read to us—again. This and other crises facing the U.S. will require leadership and sacrifice. Not Laissez-Faire political inaction.

Mass transit, enforced CAFE standards, funding for alternatives in transportation, wind, solar and wave generation. No more subsidies for oil companies. These must be the priorities for Congress.

Nuclear energy is not clean, it is not safe in the long term and it only lines the pockets of the major construction firms.

Take a risk and lead from the front for a change.

MARK.

I have always ridden my bike or walked around town to do my errands, instead of using my vehicle. But when I have to work 15 miles away, I have to drive, plus driving is part of my job.

I can no longer drive to see my 93-year-old aunt; it would cost way too much. Yesterday, here in Hailey, a half tank of gas cost me over \$45. I can no longer afford to drive to visit friends or go sightseeing.

I now have to buy cheaper quality foods and have to eat a lot more starch than I desire to do. Forget beef! That is totally out of the question.

I do not have air conditioning, so I am not using extra energy there. I am very careful about leaving lights, TVs, computers, etc. off when I am not using them. I run my washer at night and hang my clothes on the line outdoors in good weather, indoors on a drying rack in bad weather. And I have always done this; I have always tried to save energy, but I still get screwed because most people do not.

I have recycled for many years, and yet there are many places in Idaho where recycling is not mandatory, so people do not bother doing it. This includes well-to-do, educated people, who just do not care, but would change their habits if it were the law.

The price of everything has gone up, but my salary has gone down, and I am frequently out of work. These are not good times; pretty soon it will be a choice of gasoline or my medications. Alternative fuel vehicles should have been available for the general public at least 30 years ago. We all know the technology is there.

Sign me as Disgusted in Idaho

GLORIA, *Hailey*.

We are changing our lifestyle! We are driving less. I simply have stopped all but the most absolutely necessary trips into town. We are moving appointments to coincide with the one day a week we go to town, including attending a Friday night worship service instead of making another trip into town on Sunday to attend. We have quit participating in activities such as extra-curricular lessons and sports as the added driving necessary to do these activities is now unaffordable.

Increased energy prices are being reflected in increased food prices at the grocery store and at restaurants. We have stopped eating out at restaurants completely, and have made major adjustments to our eating habits, and to portions served during meals at home. We are going back to a simpler and less varied diet, and just trying to keep the staples like beans, rice, milk, bread, eggs and cheese.

These changes we have made as a family do have an effect on our local economy, as we are holding on to more of our dollars, and not spending them in the community, the local community businesses suffer—it is noticeable because there are a lot of families like ours who are doing the same thing we are because we simply have to in order to survive.

Our country is in a real predicament with the way the government has managed our agricultural production as it ties in with energy production. Ethanol is a poor solution as it requires an imbalance in our crop production, and now wheat prices are sky-high and production is behind. Corn uses a lot of water, which requires fuel to pump and irrigate with, so the net result of ethanol production to use is worse than with pure fossil fuel.

I am not so concerned with the rising cost of fuel, as we truly do have lower fuel costs than most of the rest of the world, and there is nothing wrong with changing our lifestyles to be less consumptive of our resources. What does anger me is that fuel companies are recording record profits quarter after quarter, while the cost of fuel is sending our entire economy into a crisis, and causing our nation to be weakened as a whole.

KRISTINE, *Spirit Lake*.

First off, I would like to thank you for taking action on our country's current energy crisis. I was starting to think that most of our country's politicians were either simply ignoring the issue or were not taking it seriously. I am so glad to know that you are taking the initiative to look for answers to the problem, and I am even more impressed that you are actively looking for answers among the people you represent. This does more to win my [confidence] than any [action] could ever do.

My husband and I enjoy traveling, and the rise in prices has definitely cut down on our travel this summer. We are staying home more often and eating out less. My husband is a student in the nursing program at ISU in Pocatello, and we are concerned about trying to pay for gas as he travels between Idaho Falls and Pocatello on a daily basis this fall. In a more specific example, my husband's mother has Alzheimer's disease, and since our time left with her is limited, we planned a family reunion this year to give her at least one more chance to have all of her children and grandchildren around her. Some of my husband's family live far away, and as airline prices continue to increase, it has really strained their budgets to try to buy plane tickets to come to Idaho. As a family, we have all pitched in to help pay needed travel expenses, but it has been tough. I hate to sound like a whiner, vacationing and eating out are things I can, in the long run, live without, but the problem is that energy prices just keep getting higher, and I do not see any light at the end of the tunnel. I am starting to worry that I will not be able to afford to heat my home this winter. This last winter we used an electric blanket so we could turn our heat off at night and save energy, and we kept our thermostat low and dressed in warm clothes during the day, but Idaho winters are cold, and there is not much more we can do to conserve. We have

to have energy to heat our homes and transport us to work and school, and we are getting to the brink of not being able to afford it.

As for answers to the problem, I am no expert on this stuff, but I have done a little reading, and the best answers I can find are as follows:

(1) Build coal to oil plants. Our country has a lot of coal, and we can produce oil from coal for cheaper than we are buying it right now.

(2) Make a push to build more nuclear power plants in the US, and get to work on building them NOW!—they take a long time to build and we are running out of time. I realize there is a strong minority in our country that is good at halting any effort toward starting new nuclear energy plants, but I think if the American public were better educated on the benefits, safety, and cleanliness of nuclear power, the public would stand up against those minorities that are stopping nuclear power in the US. That is why I think that along with trying to build more nuclear power plants, we also need to educate the public.

(3) Drill ANWR. I think that speaks for itself.

(4) I have been really disappointed that our President does not seem to be saying much on the energy crisis. I think he needs to address the American people and make it clear that he sees this as a national crisis. I think he needs to outline for the public what options are being debated in Washington, and what the road blocks are we face. I really think that if he would address this problem directly and publically, it would capture the public's attention and get people more active in standing up and working together to help fix the problem. When 9/11 happened and our country faced a huge crisis, the people of this country came together to help those in need. I think that if we had a leader that let the public know what was going on with the energy crisis—i.e., why we are having such a huge energy crisis and what our options are to fix things—then the people of this country would band together to find answers. Personally, I would like to see the American public band together to fight against all the minority groups out there that stand in the way of things like nuclear power and drilling for oil in places like ANWR, but that just might be me.

Thanks for your efforts. I am glad to know someone in Washington is working on this.

LALOVE, *Idaho Falls*.

I believe getting a handle on energy prices is of utmost importance for our economy. If we do not get it under control, I believe we are headed for a depression the likes of we have never seen before. With the trade imbalance growing along with the cost of oil, at some point something is going to break because we cannot keep a deficit growing at this rate. It is vital that we look into alternative energy sources but that is years away and we need to solve this problem now. It also bothers me that a lot of the money being spent is going to countries that support terrorism. That just seems so backwards.

We need to develop the resources we have. It is so ironic that the activists that are preventing the development of our resources may in fact actually destroy the things they are trying to preserve. I am in favor of protecting the environment but we need to do it in the right way. When energy prices reach a certain point, the majority of the population will demand that these resources get developed any way possible and that would probably end up destroying the environment worse than if we do it the right way now. You can not stop development of it forever

and I think we need to do it now when we can control how it is done. In other words, I believe there is a point where the resources will be developed without concern for the environment. I do not think we are far from that.

In summary, I think we need to start developing our oil resources now and continue to work on alternative energy (including nuclear). If we delay I believe it will be economically and environmentally disastrous for us.

BRENT, *Meridian*.

Speed limits 55 mph national. This might help. Slow up and save money.

LOWELL, *Emmett*.

We lost our semi, our independent trucking business. We cannot afford groceries anymore. We nearly lost our house of 16 years, too. If [changes are not made soon], all Americans stand to lose a lot.

JOHN and LAURIE.

Reduce highway speed limits. I drive the interstate between Nampa and Fruitland three times per week. The speed of the traffic, although the limit is 75, is 65 or less. Motorists want permission to drive slower. Lower the speed limit to 55. Truckers would then have a reason to drive slower. They want to save money, but since the speed limit is 65 and all the finances around their trip is based on traveling that legal limit—they have to go 65.

LORI, *Nampa*.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING BRONZE MEDAL SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

● Mr. BUNNING. Madam President, today I congratulate the top public schools in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. I was pleased to learn that U.S. News and World Report awarded 26 high schools in Kentucky with a bronze medal for their outstanding performance on standardized exams and for providing college-level coursework.

These 26 Kentucky high schools have shown that they foster an environment that serves all students, no matter their academic goals, by demonstrating a commitment to excellence through quality education. These Bronze Medal Schools back this up with measurable academic outcomes that show improvement throughout a range of performance indicators.

I have always been proud of Kentucky education because of its relentless effort to enhance and develop the lives of every student. This is a well deserved recognition for the excellent work that is done by all of these high schools, and I would like to congratulate each for its great success.

The following schools were commended with awards: Barbourville City School in Barbourville, KY; Bardstown High School in Bardstown, KY; Central High School in Louisville, KY; Corbin High School in Corbin, KY; Dawson Springs High School in Dawson Springs, KY; Eminence High School in Eminence, KY; Evarts High School in Evarts, KY; Frederick Fraize High School in Cloverport, KY; Graves County High School in Mayfield, KY; Hancock County High School in Lewisport,